



NAC-USA
DEVELOPMENT
INSTITUTE

I am the
Way, the
Truth, and
the Life

I am the
Resurrection
and the Life

I am the
Bread of
Life

MIDWEEK SCRIPT

2018

January

Session 1 – I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life

Welcome to our first small group session of 2018! We're excited to grow with you this year, and it's our prayer that you continue to be blessed by every session and discussion you have. As a church, our motto for this new year is "Faithful to Christ," and so our sessions this month will focus on who Jesus is, and will affirm the reasons why He is the object of our faith and worthy of our devotion.

If we are to be "faithful to Christ," let's start with a reminder about what faith is. The author of Hebrews teaches us that, *Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen* (Hebrews 11:1). Why is Jesus the object of our faith? Simply because He is our hope and our confidence. We know He will fulfill all His promises because of what He has done already. It is through Him and His testimony provided to us in Scripture that we know, perceive, and see our Heavenly Father. We remain faithful to Christ by continually looking to Him in all situations. So, be encouraged this year by the following from Hebrews 12:1-2:

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

The One to whom we are faithful has redeemed mankind through His sacrifice on the cross and now sits at the right hand of God mediating on our behalf until He returns. He is the great "I AM."

That is a unique expression, isn't it? To say that someone is the "I AM"? But these two words carry great significance. When Moses received his calling to help free the Israelites from captivity in Egypt, he asked God, *"Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?"* And God said to Moses, *"I AM WHO I AM"* (Exodus 3:13-15). In Greek, "I AM" is *egō eimi*, which literally means, "I always have been, I currently am, and I will always be."

Jesus made seven "I AM" statements about Himself, as recorded in the Gospel of John, fully knowing that the words, "I AM," were significant to the Jewish audience that He addressed. Regardless of how He completed the sentence, every time that Jesus used the phrase "I AM," He was declaring that He is the always existing, eternal God of Moses.

We will spend the rest of this month examining three of the seven "I AM" statements of Jesus. The first statement we'll dive into is found in John 14:6, where Jesus said to Thomas, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*

Jesus spoke these words to His disciples, while in the upper room, as part of His farewell discourse just hours before His arrest and execution. They were gathered together to celebrate the Jewish Passover when Jesus started to inform them of some pretty heavy things. After telling them that He would be betrayed by one of them, He went on to tell them that He would be leaving them.

Can you imagine the tension in the room and how troubled all of their hearts must have been? After Jesus told them that He would be leaving them, He continued by mentioning that they knew where He was going and the way to get there. Thomas then responded by telling Jesus that they *didn't* know where He was going and therefore *didn't* know the way to get there. It was then that Jesus informed them that *He* was going to His Father and that *He* is the way for them to get there.

With this statement, Jesus set Himself apart from everyone else. In the Greco-Roman world where Jesus lived – a world that accepted all kinds of new religions, many gods, and many ways to get to those gods – Jesus' exclusive statement was troubling for many. For His disciples, including us today, these words of Jesus Christ, who was God incarnate on earth, strengthen and edify our faith. They tell us that:

1. First, Jesus is the one and only way to the Father. There is no other way into the presence of God than by accepting Jesus Christ's death as payment in full for our sins.

2. Second, Jesus is the source of all truth about God, the Father. Jesus as “the truth” means He is the authoritative representative, the true revealer of God.
3. And third, Jesus is the only remedy God has provided for man’s problem with sin and the only way to eternal life.

As the only sinless human ever to walk the earth, Jesus was able to keep all of the commands and laws of God, and walk in His ways and truth. When you are lost, confused, or trapped in the darkness of life, remember these words of Jesus and reaffirm your faith in Him. He will shine a light to your pathway, teach you the truth, and transform your life.

Session 2 – I am the Resurrection and the Life

Welcome back! Each of the seven “I AM” statements of Jesus teach us something extraordinary about who He is. They can become a foundation for us to grow our faith in Him. Today we’re going to discuss the one found in John 11: *I am the resurrection and the life.*

Let’s back up a little and look at the context of this statement. Jesus was with His disciples when He received a message that Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, was very ill. Now Jesus was a few days’ travel from Bethany, where Lazarus was, but He decided to stay with His disciples for two more days. After two days’ time, Jesus said, *“Let us go to Judea again.”* This concerned the disciples, because some people from that area around Bethany wanted to stone Jesus. But Jesus admonished them, and they made their way to Bethany. He not only put Himself in danger for His friends, but Jesus also set in motion the events that would eventually lead to His death on the cross.

When Jesus arrived, He discovered that Lazarus had already been dead and in the tomb for four days. In John 11:20-27 we read:

Now Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him, but Mary was sitting in the house. Now Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.”

*Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha said to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” Jesus said to her, “**I am the resurrection and the life.** He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” She said to Him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”*

When we look at Martha’s first statement to Jesus, it could sound like she is angry with Him for not coming sooner. However, when we put her first and second statement together, it takes on a different tone. *“But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.”* Martha continued to have faith in Jesus, *even now* that Lazarus had died, *even now* in the midst of her loss. How often have we felt that God has been indifferent towards us? How often have we felt that He has left us alone?

Jesus said to her, *“Your brother will rise again.”* And she responded, *“I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”* We can tell by Martha’s response to Jesus that she had faith in what Jesus will do in the future – but Jesus wanted to bring her to a new and different understanding. He wanted to show her that new life was available through Him at that very moment! Her last reply to Jesus, *“Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is come into the world,”* shows us her unflinching faithfulness again.

She may not have understood what Jesus meant by saying that He is “the resurrection,” but she professed that she believed He is the Son of God. Martha teaches us what faith looks like in the silences of God, in the

uncertainties of life. Even when we do not understand everything that Jesus is leading us through, we have faith that it is for our good, just as it says in Jeremiah 29:11, *For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.*

Jesus identifies Himself as “*the resurrection and the life.*” He is not just the giver or the conduit, but rather Jesus, Himself, *is* the divine life that has come to the world to make resurrected life possible. He is the reason that we will rise on the last day, and He is also the reason that a life spent believing in Him will not be interrupted by death. The power of life and resurrection is here and available now, in the person of Jesus. By faith in Christ and through the power of His Spirit, we can have new life. Paul reminds us of this in his letter to the Corinthians: *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new* (2 Corinthians 5:17). Faith in Christ makes abundant life possible – eternal life that transcends death.

It is ironic that Jesus gives us life by having given up His own life in His death on the cross. Even in death, He is the resurrection and the life. This is what we are called to remember when we celebrate the Lord’s Supper; not just Jesus breaking bread and sharing wine with His disciples, but rather we must place ourselves at the foot of the cross. With the words, “the body and blood of Jesus given for you,” we must remember Jesus’ sacrifice, and at the same time, believe in the life and resurrection that He embodies and makes available to us.

Session 3 – I am the Bread of Life

Welcome back! As we continue to reflect upon our motto for the year, “Faithful to Christ,” may we rejoice in considering that Jesus is not only the bringer of salvation but also the true personification of it.

This week’s small group session continues with the “I AM” statements of Jesus and focuses in particular on the first one, found in John 6:35, where He states: *I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.*

Jesus said this to people for whom bread was the staple of life. It was not a luxury item, but a necessity. The context of this saying is the feeding of the five thousand. Jesus had just fed a crowd with bread and fish, and then they came back the next day looking for more bread. Jesus had given them bread that brought life for their bodies, but on their second encounter, Jesus challenged them by saying that He Himself is the bread that brings eternal life.

See, Jesus tried to lift their minds from earthly things to heavenly realities – to an understanding that He is necessary for spiritual life, just as bread is necessary for physical survival. Jesus even told them, “*Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures for everlasting life*” (John 6:27). Those questioning Jesus in our verses went to a lot of trouble to find Him. Yet their work was for the food that perishes – things that fill a stomach and satisfy earthly needs. Jesus wanted to redirect their desire towards the food that sustains everlasting life.

When we are hungry, we feel as though food will answer all our problems. It’s the same way with almost all other practical difficulties we find ourselves in. Just as Jesus tried to lift their understanding above their material, physical needs, we need to have our minds lifted as well.

In Jesus’ response to the people, He hoped to lift their eyes from material bread and earthly kingdoms to spiritual realities. They needed to put their confidence in Jesus, as He truly was all they would ever need!

So, as we ponder this example, let us keep Jesus' statement focused in our mind: *I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.* Through this statement, Jesus invites us to **come, believe, and partake**. Let's take a closer look at this invitation:

COME

First of all, come! Our education, wealth, age, and ethnicity do not matter; we are all invited and called to come to the Savior, Jesus Christ! Jesus explained that the one who comes to Him – that is, receives Him and believes in Him – will find his spiritual hunger satisfied.

Charles Spurgeon, a preacher in the 1800s, said, "Faith in Christ is simply and truly described as coming to Him. It is not an acrobatic feat; it is simply a coming to Christ...Coming is a very simple action indeed; it seems to have only two things about it, one is, to come away from something, and the other is, to come to something."

One of the interesting things I find in this quote is that Spurgeon highlights the idea that we have to leave or walk away from something in order to come to Jesus. Can you think of something that you need to walk away from to come to Jesus today?

Coming to Jesus has to be tied to belief in who He is and what He is offering us.

BELIEVE

With His disciples, Jesus began to elaborate on the statement, "*I am the bread of life,*" eventually ending in, "*Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you*" (John 6:53). At the end of the sixth chapter, John records this scene:

Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, "This is a hard saying; who can understand it?" And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father."

From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?" But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Wow...what a scene! What a question! *Do you also want to go away?* Scores of would-be followers of Jesus had just left Him, and yet Jesus seemed resolute to continue His mission. Jesus wasn't questioning His Father's will because some didn't believe, and He didn't get discouraged because some turned away. He trusted in His Father's plan and wanted to make sure that His disciples trusted as well.

Speaking for the twelve, Simon Peter gave a wonderful statement of faith when he said: *Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.* He recognized Jesus as Lord – as the preferred or even only choice, despite the difficulties. He recognized the value of spiritual things more than the material and earthly desires of those who walked away. He recognized Jesus as the Messiah and Son of the living God.

PARTAKE

Finally, one of the last things Jesus said to His disciples was, "*He who eats this bread will live forever*" (John 6:58). Jesus offers us heavenly bread for eternal life, but we must eat it. Faith in Jesus is not compared with tasting or admiring, but with eating. Jesus says that we must have Him within us, and we must partake of Him.

Seeing a loaf of bread on a plate will not satisfy our hunger. Knowing the ingredients in the bread will not satisfy our hunger. Taking pictures of the bread will not satisfy our hunger. Telling other people about the bread will not satisfy our hunger. Nothing will satisfy our hunger and bring us life except actually eating the bread. He who eats this bread will live forever.